

BATTLE OF WINDSOR.

The following narrative of facts connected with the action of the 4th of December, is furnished by eye-witnesses and actors in that affair. It has been withheld to this date, that time might be allowed for excitement to subside, and opportunity afforded the authors of any erroneous or hasty statements, given of it, to make the necessary corrections. But the time has arrived when it would be highly culpable longer to withhold its publication. Several weeks have elapsed since the appearance of two statements of the affair, both extremely deficient and erroneous in many important points, and greatly calculated, whether intentionally or not, to mislead the public. As no corrections of these statements have been made, either by their authors or others, a longer silence would tend to sanction and perpetuate the misconceptions they have too generally produced. "The contributors to this narrative think it due to the public, and to themselves, that there should be no misconceptions in an affair of so much importance—that 'even-handed justice' should be meted out to all concerned. They, therefore, un-influenced by partialities or prejudices, and solely for the cause of truth, submit their statement to the public, pledging themselves for its correctness in all its essential points, and holding themselves ready to substantiate what they thus set forth.

To give a correct view of the affair, it is necessary to commence the narrative with a brief outline of circumstances some weeks antecedent to the day of the attack.

From about the first of November it was reported, and generally believed, that large bodies of Brigands, from all parts of the United States, were wending their way to the State of Michigan for the purpose of invading our country. The point of attack was variously stated to be Malden, Sandwich, and Windsor. The inhabitants of the two latter places were kept in a constant state of excitement and alarm by their proximity to Detroit, the reputed head-quarters of the enemy, and the want of sufficient means to repel any serious invasion. To add to their anxiety and alarm, Major Reid, of the 393 Regiment, who held the command at Sandwich, was called to the London District, and that important trust devolved on Col. John Prince. The effective force at that time consisted of Company No. 1, and 11 men of Company No. 2, Provincial Volunteer Militia commanded by Capt. Sparke, and 4 Companies of Col. Prince's battalion, commanded respectively by Captains Fox, Lewis, Thebo and Elliott. To Captain Lewis was committed the charge of the important post at Windsor.

With so small a force it was necessary to maintain the greatest watchfulness against any sudden attack; and to ensure that vigilance so essential to our safety, nearly all the inhabitants of Sandwich, not connected with any of the above companies, acted as voluntary night patrol. As more definite and certain information of the strength and intentions of the Brigands was received, our situation became more alarming. Some of our most respectable and influential inhabitants waited on Colonel Prince with a request that he would ask Col. Airey, commanding at Malden, to send up one or two companies of Regulars. His request Col. Prince declined complying with, intimating something like a fear that such an application would be considered as an evidence of cowardice—assuring the gentlemen that his battalion was abundantly able to protect us from any attack of the enemy. His assurances, however, had little weight in allaying the alarm of the public; nor was it lessened by the painful discovery that the post at Windsor had been entrusted to an officer utterly unqualified for such an important duty. Night after night was Capt. Lewis detected by the Volunteer Patrol in the most culpable negligence. His sentinels were placed without judgment, and their duties were performed in the most slovenly and unsoldier-like manner. Indeed, it became too apparent to every reflecting observer, that the post was liable and likely to be surprised whenever the enemy might think proper to make the experiment. Under such circumstances, Francis Baby, Robert Mercer and James Douglass, Esquires, addressed a request to Col. Airey that a part of Capt. Bell's Company, (No. 2 Provincial Volunteers) then doing duty as sentinels at Malden, might be sent to Windsor, and Capt. Lewis' Company be called to Malden to take their place. This request, most unfortunately, as the sequel proves, was not granted.

On Friday, the 30th of November, information was received from unquestionable authority, that a large body of Brigands, say from 400 to 600, were assembled on the farm of Mr. Marranette and Major Forsyth, about 3 miles below the city of Detroit. Their watch-fires on that evening were distinctly seen from Sandwich, and stimulated the Volunteer Patrols to double vigilance. On Saturday, the 1st of December, intelligence was brought that early on that morning the greater part of them had left their camp and spread themselves along the lower shore of the river in Detroit, making "Uncle Ben Wood" world's head-quarters. It was said that a considerable body had also passed the city and encamped in the vicinity of the "Poor House," on the Port Gratiot road, about 2 miles out of town. On Sunday, the 2d, it was known that the encampment on the farm of Mr. Marranette had been visited by a detachment of United States troops, headed by Gen. Brady and Major Payne, who put to flight the few Brigands who were left there as a guard, and captured 15 boxes of arms. A report was also current on that day that one of their leaders, and a "sub-treasurer" of their military chest, had absconded, and with all the funds. On Monday, the 3d it was stated, and generally be-

lieved, that disheartened by the foregoing misfortunes, the Brigands had abandoned their undertaking and dispersed. Certain it is, that very few of the ruffians were to be seen on that day in Detroit, and "Uncle Ben Wood" was deserted as it generally is, or as any other establishment of the kind could be which had been made the rendezvous of such polluting scoundrels. Deceived by these appearances, and trusting to the known and untrusting vigilance of Gen. Brady, and above all, relying on what was believed the impassable state of the river, the Volunteer Patrols, on that night, relaxed in its usual vigilance, leaving the safety of all our inhabitants, and all that was dear to them, to the keeping of Capt. Lewis. Most unfortunately Gen. Brady, too, deceived by the same circumstances, and depending on Judge McDonnell, Collector, to have the steamer Champlain (the only boat not laid up, or in the employ of the U. S.) rendered useless by the removal of its valves, relaxed also in his accustomed vigilance—and our watchful foes, possessed of all these circumstances, took advantage of them, and at one o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, 4th, about 240 of them seized the Champlain. We do not learn that there was any resistance on the part of her crew—certainly there could have been none worth mentioning, or the alarm would have reached Gen. Brady. After raising steam, the boat was cast off and landed our invaders at 3 o'clock, A. M., on the farm of Alex. Pelette, about 4 miles above the village of Windsor, which latter place is directly opposite the city of Detroit, the Capital of the State of Michigan, and two miles above the town of Sandwich.

It is here to be observed, that although so many on both sides of the river were lulled into fancied security by the arts of the Brigands, yet, all were not so deceived. Several loyal subjects residing in Detroit had ferreted out their deep laid plans. Three of these truly "patriotic" fellows having obtained certain intelligence that an attack would be made on Monday night, came over late on Sunday, the 30th, that day and gave information at the Barracks to that effect. One of the three enrolled the same evening in Capt. Lewis' Company; another, his companion, remained with him in the Barracks; and the third, knowing his doom should the Brigands prove successful, proceeded to Malden. The two former fell martyrs to loyalty and love of country, while gallantly defending the Barracks.

From the Barracks the Brigands marched down to Windsor without being challenged or opposed. When they had nearly arrived at the Barracks, occupied by a part of Capt. Lewis' company, two of their number, who had been sent in advance to reconnoitre, were met and challenged by the Cavalry Patrol. As they did not answer the challenge, the Patrol turned and rode back to the Barracks, and relating the circumstance to the Sentinel proceeded to report to Capt. Lewis. The quarters were about 1.4 miles from the town down the road. As soon as the two men had approached within sight of the Sentinel he challenged, and receiving no answer, levelled his piece to fire, the enemy simultaneously doing the same. By a singular coincidence the pieces of both parties missed fire. The Sentinel stepped inside the Barracks to re-prime and give the alarm. When he stepped out again he found the head of a column of Brigands had reached the town, where he first saw the two men. He fired his piece at this body, and again entered the Barracks to rouse its inmates to action. The few men on duty promptly answered the call by rushing out and opening a galling fire upon the advancing foe; killing one of their Captains named Lewis, and wounding several of their men. The brave Sentinel, (Osterbury) forcing his way through his companions to have another shot, and holding up his musket to facilitate his movements, received a ball and two buck shot in his left arm, which obliged him to retire from the conflict. As long as their ammunition held out, our men made a most gallant resistance; and when it failed, ten or twelve effected their retreat, and the rest, about 12, surrendered to the enemy, who set fire to the Barracks and the adjoining house belonging to Mr. Francois Janssens, which, with the house occupied by Mr. Rieter, were burned to the ground. An inoffensive colored man, named Mills, who resided near the scene of action, coming out of his house to see what was the matter, was taken by the Brigands, and on refusing to join them was barbarously shot. From the Barracks the Brigands proceeded to set on fire the steam boat Thames, belonging to Duncan McGregor, Esq, and then laid up at Mr. Van Allen's wharf, nearly opposite. They did not succeed in their attempt, but in about an hour afterwards accomplished their purpose. When the boat was fired they compelled Mr. Black and others of our people to assist them in getting her yawl out of the ice, in which they placed some of their party who had been wounded in the attack on the Barracks, and sent them over to Detroit.

From Captain Lewis' Quarters the horse-patrol proceeded to give the alarm at Sandwich. In a very short time Captain Sparke with No. 1, and about 8 men of No. 2, companies of Provincial Volunteer Militia, (amounting in the whole to not more than 40 men) together with a number of the inhabitants of the town were on the march for Windsor. They were immediately followed and overtaken before arriving at the scene of action, by about 60 men of Col. Prince's Battalion of Essex Militia, under Captains Fox, Thebo and Elliott. On their way up, they were met by various persons retreating from Windsor, among whom was Captain Lewis, who stated that his barracks had been attacked and fired and his men detained; but with what loss he could not tell, as he had immediately left the place. When the entire party had arrived at Mr. Mailleux's about half a mile below Wind-

sor, Capt. Thebo, with his company, left the road and made a detour so as to come in the rear of the village, a manoeuvre, which in the sequel proved of great advantage, as enabling our brave militia to cut off many of the Brigands in their subsequent flight towards the woods. The other parties continued their march up the road and at a short distance below the entrance of the village, Captain Sparke halted and formed his men—while the militia under Captains Fox and Elliott, also halted and were marshalled by Capt. Bell, of the 24 Company Provincial Volunteers, assisted by Captain Leslie of Col. Prince's Battalion. Both parties then resumed the march, and when arrived at the lower end of the village, again halted to reconnoitre. Intelligence was quickly brought by James Douglass, Esq, and W. R. Wood, Esq, who had gone some distance in advance, that the enemy, (about 130 in number) had been drawn up across the road, but were then filing to the left into an orchard belonging to Francis Baby Esq. Instantly the militia led by Capt. Bell, struck off the road into the orchard of Mr. Jan. and marching up along the fence opened a well directed fire upon the enemy. In the mean time Captain Sparke with his command and the volunteer inhabitants who had joined him, continued his march directly up the road and on arriving at the spot where the enemy had left, discovered them encoined in the orchard and in the act of retreating the fire which had been opened upon them by Captains Fox and Elliott. Captain Sparke wheeled his command off the road & after pouring a well directed fire, led his gallant followers over an intervening fence to give the brigands the steel. But the rascals waited not the touch of British bayonets—retreating the fire, they "broke cover" and fled across the fields in the direction of the woods. Pursuit was given by the whole party and continued to the edge of the woods by Captains Fox and Elliott, preceded by Capt. Thebo, whose judicious position brought him well to the left of the enemy. Several of the brigands were killed in the chase, among whom were their leaders Punsand and Harvey, the "Big Kentuckian," and one of their standard bearers, (whose colors were captured by Ensign Rankin of Captain Sparke's company) and a great number were wounded. Many of them to expedite their flight relieved themselves of their arms, accoutrements and ammunition, and even of parts of their clothing. One man of Capt. Elliott's company was killed, and another wounded in the pursuit in excellent fashion. Captain Sparke finding the pursuit in excellent fashion, he ordered his party about half a mile from the main road, preparatory to marching back to dislodge any party who might have remained in Windsor. Just at this time Col. Prince made his first appearance on the field! Though some think he may have arrived a few moments sooner, as being dressed in a fusian shooting coat and fur cap, he might not have been immediately recognised. Col. Prince may be, at this important moment, he informed Capt. Sparke and the other officers, that the party that he had just received intelligence that upwards of two hundred Brigands were marching down from Detroit on the American side for the purpose of crossing over and attacking Sandwich in front, and that another body had gone round through the groves to attack it in the rear. From this statement of Col. Prince, it was deemed advisable to retire to Sandwich without delay, in order to defend that place, where all our ammunition, provisions and the only gun we possessed were deposited. The men who were in triumphant pursuit of the flying foe were immediately recalled, and Col. Prince ordered the whole force to march back to Sandwich at double quick time. Before the party left the field A. S. Cheeseman of the 3d Essex, who had acted as a volunteer, brought up a prisoner whom he had taken. He surrendered him to Col. Prince, who ordered him to be shot upon the spot, and it was done accordingly. Previous to the commencement of our retrograde movements and during its progress, several persons joined us, bringing various accounts of the strength of a rear guard or reserve of the brigands which was still in possession of Windsor. This body, headed (as is said) by General Bree, at the time the action commenced in the orchard, was drawn up in front of the burning barracks, it afterwards advanced nearly opposite the place where Captain Sparke had crossed the fence. Just at this time, D. A. C. G. Morse, and Doctor Hume, of the Medical staff, and others came from Sandwich in a wagon, and drove directly up to it, thinking it was a party of our own militia. As Mr. Morse jumped out of the wagon in front, and was about to address them, he was stopped by a young woman, who informed him of their true character. Mr. Morse quickly communicated the intelligence to Doctor Hume, and retreated round the corner of the adjoining house. As the Doctor attempted to retreat, holding a pistol in his hand, and keeping his "face to the foe," the brigands presented their pieces at him. Mr. Tyas Baker, who had also approached the party, believing them to be friends, called out, "do not shoot that man, he is the Doctor," and seeing one of their pieces flash, in the attempt to kill him, again called out, "do not shoot that man, he is our doctor." The Brigands turned towards Tyas and demanded, "how will does he not surrender?" The pause caused by the enquiry, enabled the Doctor to get past the corner of a house, under cover of which he crossed a fence and gained the rear of the dwelling of Mr. Cole, some of the brigands left the ranks in pursuit, and one, said to be Bennett, a silver smith, and resident of Detroit, taking the lead, rested his piece upon the fence which the Doctor had just crossed, and fired—Bennett then turned to his party and said "you may go and take his sword, he will not run any other risk." Several then proceeded to "finish" him, as they expressed it, and in doing so, mangled his remains in the most shocking manner. This minute statement

of the transaction is given to correct a fabrication got up, either as an attempt at a miserable palliation of the brutal act, or for the purpose of effect, viz: "that the brigands had shot Dr. Hume, under the impression that he was Colonel Prince." After killing the Doctor, they fired several shots at D. A. C. G. Morse, who had a most miraculous escape—one of his bullets passing through his hair. The others of the party in the wagon were made prisoners by the brigands. On our forces reaching Sandwich, it was positively ascertained that no body of men had been seen either on the American side of the river, opposite Sandwich, or in the groves in the rear of the town, as stated by Col. Prince's informants. Intelligence was also given by James Douglass, Esq, and other respects, that the Brigands had been reconnoitring at Windsor, that the brigands remaining at that place certainly did not exceed one hundred men; and that they were evidently preparing to leave it, as they had fallen back from the spot where they had murdered Doctor Hume, to a position in front of the site of Gardner & Babcock. Colonel Prince was made acquainted with these facts and earnestly solicited by Mr. Douglass and others, as he had now 200 men upon the ground, to send up a force to dislodge the enemy. This he refused to do, giving as his reasons, that the information could not be correct—that the party at Windsor must be much stronger than represented—that his post was at Sandwich, and if he should leave it, he would, by so doing, subject himself to trial by a Court Martial, and the liability of being shot." He further stated that he had on the first alarm, despatched Mr. Douglass and others to some Regulars and a field piece, and that he did not think it advisable to march against the enemy until their arrival, which might be expected in two or three hours. The appearance of this reinforcement was now most anxiously looked for, as it was plainly seen that no movement would be made until it had arrived. In the mean time information continued to be received from many respectable individuals who had been closely reconnoitring the weakness of the enemy and their evident alarm and dread of being attacked. It was confidently stated that even 50 men could disperse or make prisoners of the whole party; and Ensign Rankin, of the Provincial volunteers, solicited Col. Prince for that number, with whom he gallantly volunteered to drive the polluting ruffians from our soil. His request was denied, and the enemy remained for hours in possession of the village without any attempt being made to dislodge them; and were actually permitted to march off at their leisure, with drum beating, and colors flying. After they had vacated Windsor, burseman after horseman hurried down to apprise Col. Prince that they had retreated to the Windmills, (their place of debarkation) and were escaping by canoes to Hog Island; this intelligence, however, did not cause Col. Prince to change his determination to remain at Sandwich until the arrival of the Regulars. About an hour or longer after the expected reinforcement, a prisoner who had been wounded and taken after the engagement was brought into town. He was conducted, surrounded by several of our men, towards Col. Prince, who was then standing in the most frequented part of our main street. As the prisoner approached he was told by one of the officers to make his peace with God, as he had but a few minutes to live. The wretched man holding up both his hands, pleaded most earnestly for mercy, but Col. Prince commanded him to be shot upon the spot, and the same officer who had first addressed him, probably to disengage him from those by whom he was surrounded, ordered him to "run for his life"—and in an instant a dozen muskets were levelled for his execution. At this moment Col. William Elliott, of the 3d Essex, who chanced to be near at hand, exclaimed "do you, you cowardly rascals, are you going to murder your prisoner?" This exclamation, and one instant retarded the fire of the party, but the next the prisoner was brought to the ground; he sprang again to his feet, and ran round the corner of a fence, where he was met by a person coming from an opposite direction and shot through the head. From papers found upon his person, it appeared his name was "Bennett." It is to be regretted that this painful affair took place in our most public street, and in the presence of several ladies and children, who had been attracted to the doors and windows by the strange events of the morning, but who little expected to witness so awful a tragedy. Another brigand named Dennison, also wounded and unarmed, was taken after the action and brought in during the course of the morning. Charles Elliot, Esq, happening to be present when the prisoner was about to be shot by Col. Prince's orders, entreated that he might be reserved to be dealt with according to the laws of the country; but Col. Prince's reply was "D—n the rascal shoot him," and it was done accordingly.

To the great satisfaction of our anxious people, about 11 o'clock A. M. a detachment of 100 men of the 34th, under Capt. Broderick, a few artillerymen and a field piece, under Lieut. Airey, and some 40 or 50 Indians under Geo. Ironside, Esq, galloped into Sandwich.

Waiting only a few minutes to inquire the state of affairs at Windsor, which place they were told was still in possession of the brigands, although it had actually been evacuated long before they proceeded at full speed up the road in search of the enemy. Col. Prince followed the Regulars with the whole of his command and all the male inhabitants, except some 16 or 18 men of the Artillery company under Capt. Chewitt. This small force with a nine pound field piece, were posted at the north entrance of the town, and to it was committed the defence of the town, ammunition, &c. &c. When Col. Prince reached Windsor, he was informed that one of the brigands was lying wounded in the house of Mr. Wm. Johnson. The man whose leg had been shattered by a musket ball, had been found by Francis Baby, Esq, after the action, and by his orders was removed to Mr. Johnson's, with a promise of surgical assistance. Col. Prince gave the order for his execution, and he was dragged out of the house and shot accordingly. The regulars and artillery in wagons, and the Indians on horseback, were by this time about three miles in advance of Col. Prince's party. They had discovered no enemy at Windsor and so continued the pursuit to the windmills, where they found the reported escape of the brigands but too correct. Nothing could be seen of those whom the militia drove to the woods, nor of those who had so long held possession of Windsor, except one man who was made prisoner, and 5 or 6 others who were in a cowering in canoes to Hog Island. The captured brigand made earnest appeals for mercy, to which Capt. Broderick replied, "You have fallen into the hands of a British officer." On discovering the canoe, Lieut. Airey ordered the field piece to be unlimbered and a fire to be opened upon the retreating rascals. Some capital shots were made but without effect, until Lt. Airey himself pointed the gun, when one shot struck the canoe amid ships, just as it reached the shore, and killed one man and severely wounded another.

When the brigands first commenced crossing to the Island, they dismissed some of our men whom they had carried prisoners from Windsor; the rest they put into the windmills and detained there until the last of their party was ready to leave, and then dismissed them also.

As soon as Gen'l Brady was apprised of the invasion of our country, he despatched Major Payne with a detachment of U. S. Troops and a field piece on board the Steamboat, to act as circumstances might require. Major Payne, at the time the brigands were making their escape in canoes, was cruising to the channel between the Island and our shore, and as it was afterwards ascertained, intercepted and made prisoners of a number, whom he delivered to the authorities at Detroit.

Capt. Broderick finding there was nothing further to be done, commenced his return to Sandwich, leaving the prisoners whom he had taken to be brought down under charge of a Dragon and some others. Col. Prince after meeting the Regulars on their return continued his march to the Windmills, and about 1.4 miles below them, fell in with Broderick's prisoner. He ordered the man to be taken from the guard and to be shot upon the spot, which was done accordingly.

About the time Capt. Broderick had commenced his return, the Indians had gone in pursuit of some of the enemy who had taken to the woods. After a sharp chase they succeeded in making 7 prisoners, one of whom in attempting to escape after being captured was fired upon, wounded and retaken. When the prisoners were first brought out of the woods, the cry was, "bayonet them," but Martin, one of the Indian braves, replied,—"No, we are christians—we will not murder them—we will deliver them to our officers to be treated as they think proper." They were then brought to Col. Prince who had now commenced his return to Sandwich. When he had arrived opposite the burning barracks, he ordered the wagon in which the prisoners had been placed, to be wheeled off the road. As soon as it had reached an open spot in the rear of the ruins, he commanded the men to be taken out and shot. At this critical moment, Charles Elliott, and Robert Mercer Esq, and the Rev. Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Samuel James rushed to the aid of the prisoners. Col. Prince, not to commit murder by shooting the prisoners, but begged him to leave them to the laws of the country. In making this appeal, Mr. James made use of the emphatic language—"For God's sake do not let a white man murder what an Indian has spared." Col. Prince yielded to the entreaties of the gentlemen, remarking to Mr. Elliott, that he would hold him responsible for his interference, as his (Col. Prince's) orders were to destroy them all.

By information received immediately after the fight of the brigands it was known that a large number had escaped to the woods. No party however was sent to scour the neighborhood, nor were any guards stationed on the shore of the river or Lake St. Clair to cut off retreat nor were the means of transportation removed by placing the canoes and boats under safe keeping. On the following day 5 or 6 gentlemen volunteers went out about 14 miles and captured 8 of the brigands. About 30 of the enemy succeeded in crossing in a body at the River St. Clair and arrived in Detroit on the following Friday, and parties of 2 to 5 continued to escape for several days, and even weeks after their defeat.

The number of the enemy killed in the engagement with those afterwards shot was correctly ascertained to be 32; and the prisoners taken, brought in and committed at Sandwich and Malden, amounted to the same number. The prisoners taken to Chatham were said to exceed 20 in number. Many of the misguided and guilty fugitives, no doubt perished in the woods from cold, hunger and wounds. Our loss was 4 killed, and 4 wounded—none mortally.

In closing this narrative, it will not be deemed presumptuous to say that the greatest praise is due to Capt. Sparke, his officers and the Provincial volunteers, for their gallantry and skill—nor to add, that the officers and men of the militia are entitled to our high consideration for their coolness, bravery and promptitude. The only opinion we will hazard, where we profess to state solely facts, is that if the brigands flattered themselves they should be joined by our gallant Canadian militia men, we think they are by this time cured of so vain a delusion.